

COMMISSION ON YOUTH

September 9, 2008

1:00 p.m.

House Room C

AGENDA

Attending: Senators Harry Blevins and R. Edward Houck;
Delegates Mamye BaCote, Robert Brink, Mark Cole, William H. Fralin, Jr., Chris Peace, and Beverly Sherwood;
Citizen members Anthony Dale, Joy Myers and Marvin Wagner

Absent: Senator Yvonne Miller

Staff Attending: Amy M. Atkinson, Joyce Garner, Cordell Hairston and Leah Hamaker

Agenda Items

I. **Call to Order and Opening Remarks**

Delegate William H. Fralin, Jr., Chair

Delegate Fralin called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Delegate Fralin welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Commission's 2008 study year and introduced the Commission's two new citizen members, Anthony Dale and Joy Myers.

II. **2008 Activities in State Government**

Ms. Atkinson

Ms. Atkinson began her discussion of the 48-page document with an acknowledgment of the contributions made to the Comprehensive Services Act programming by Kim McGaughey, former Director. Delegate Fralin, on behalf of the Commission, extended his best wishes to Ms. McGaughey.

Ms. Atkinson directed the members' attention to significant sections of the document, including - under the EDUCATION heading - the priority being given truancy and high school dropout prevention in both the legislative and executive branches and the proposed regulatory changes in special education and in accreditation.

The Advisory Group for the Commission on Youth's Truancy and High School Dropout Prevention study has been established and will hold its first meeting on Tuesday, September 23. Delegate Fralin will chair this group.

III. **Family Impact Seminars**

Ms. Atkinson

The Commission on Youth is co-sponsoring with VCU Virginia's first Family Impact Seminar for state legislators, legislative staff, and others interested in education policy. The October 22 event, which features nationally-known experts in the field, has as its focus Truancy and Dropout Prevention Policies: Strategies for Virginia's Youth. All members of the General Assembly have been invited. Delegate Fralin encouraged Commission members to plan to attend and to consider this an opportunity to plan strategies in response to the October first-time release of cohort graduation rates by the Department of Education.

IV. Alternative Education Options

Leah Hamaker, Legislative Policy Analyst

Informational presentation on the progress made over the study's three years, leading to study recommendations which will be presented to the Commission prior to the 2009 General Assembly Session. These draft recommendations will be formulated at the Advisory Group's meeting on September 16.

Dr. Cindy Cave of the Department of Education (DOE) provided answers to a question from Delegate Fralin question about what the DOE expelled/suspended student numbers represent. These are, in fact, inclusive of all students, although DOE can extract the numbers for students with disabilities,

In response to a question from Delegate BaCote about regulations governing special education students, Dr. Cave answered that the Code addresses due process and standards for Virginia. In addition, there are federal regulations governing provision of services for special education students.

Delegate Fralin indicated a desire to have the Advisory Group discuss in crafting study recommendations: pilot program(s) for over aged students; mandated individual plans for at-risk middle and high school students; the need for a clear definition for alternative education programs; and the need for additional slots for the regional alternative programs. Delegate Fralin noted that there will likely be legislative recommendations coming from the study and ideally, if there are money requests, these be presented to the Governor's Office for possible inclusion in the Governor's Budget. Commission members wishing to attend the September 16th Advisory Group meeting to participate in the discussion are encouraged to do so.

V. Local Alternative Education Options in Henrico County

*Michelle Hairston, Director of Nontraditional Programs
Henrico County Public Schools*

Ms. Hairston introduced the members of her team in attendance and provided an informational presentation of the history, goals, and accomplishments of Nontraditional Programs in Henrico County Public Schools. Delegate Fralin cited the Roland Cook program in Roanoke as one where students experience success to the extent that they prefer to remain in that learning environment.

In the discussion following, Senator Houck, Delegate BaCote, Delegate Peace and others expressed interest in having information about the program budget, including funding sources. Ms. Atkinson indicated that Commission staff would disseminate information received from Ms. Hairston to the members.

Ms. Hairston indicated, in response to a question about capacity of individual programs, that the high school programs were bulging but that they tried to still add students. Students having the most severe behavioral problems are assigned to the 16 slots available at St. Joseph's Villa.

Programs for the gifted do not fall under the Nontraditional programs, although many of the students in Nontraditional programs are gifted.

Members engaged in lengthy discussion about parental involvement in Henrico County's programs. Ms. Hairston indicated that the parents' role was key to success, but – where repeated attempts to involve them are unsuccessful – students get parented at school, with the provision of structure, positive reinforcement, etc. The program makes a concerted effort to provide education to educators as well, such that informed decisions about student placements can be reached cooperatively.

Delegate Peace asked to what extent the Henrico County program had served as a model for other localities and suggested possible sources for community/civic support. Dr. Cave from DOE indicated that Ms. Hairston and that program will be featured on the agenda at DOE's October Summit.

VI. 2008 Meeting Calendar

The Commission will meet next on December, with the time and location to be announced. At this time, legislative recommendations for the 2009 General Assembly will be acted upon. Delegate Fralin asked if study findings and recommendations could be sent to members such that there would be an opportunity to read prior to the meeting.

Members are encouraged to attend the October 22 Seminar. In addition, members are invited to attend the October 28 DOE conference relating to training and school dropout.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.